



SB 554 / HB 806: frivolous, vexatious, *ABUSIVE*, or in bad faith

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Good afternoon Committee Members. My name is Laura Anderson Wright, I am a 30 year employee of the University of Maryland, College Park where I wear two hats: I serve as Sr. Associate General Counsel & the Public Records Officer. I am here today speaking on behalf of the University of Maryland, College Park, the flagship member of the University System of Maryland.

A little about my Maryland roots: Raised & Volunteer: 14; Lived in 18, 21, 17 and now 16; Work in 21 for all of my 30 years. Thus, I am deeply invested in our State, its ideals and its flagship institution.

I apologize for submitting this testimony late; the bill is cross-filed in the House and going to subcommittee. Thus, I thought this hearing would be tabled until that subcommittee met.

As the University of Maryland's Public Records Officer, I have seen the number and complexity of requests skyrocket.

In 2023: College Park received 532 requests for 1,703,748 records.

In 2024, that number went up to 582 for over 2M records.

In 2025, we're already up to 127 as of Feb 18. We haven't even hit the 127-day mark in 2025.

And though amendments to the statute have been made – with some significantly impactful ones in 2021 – the amendments have generally been one-sided. They've failed to take into account changes in the way people communicate – via **EMAIL in particular** — and the nature of the requests themselves. As a direct result, there has been an extraordinarily negative impact on agency operations which ultimately frustrates the letter and spirit of this important statute.

Said differently, it has gotten more and more difficult to provide top notch customer service and abide by the statutory deadlines when you are processing requests that ask for 1000, 10,000 up to 750,000 pages of emails (the largest in my career).

That said, there is one amendment which attempts to provide much-needed relief. However, this now needs additional support. Section 4-1B-04 needs the element “**abusive**” added.

Abusive is not just to the *agency* and its *personnel* handling the request, but also an abuse of the *process* ... and the law.

When you

1. Receive 186 requests in a 12-month period from one person.....
 - a. This clogs up the pipeline and undermines the efficient and effective processing of requests. The abuse perpetrated by a few ruins the process for everyone else.

THAT is abusive.

2. Are threatened with physical harm if you do not process a voluminous request within 10 business days.....
 - a. For state employees who are simply doing their best with an operationally restrictive statute and tight deadlines, it is unnerving to be placed in physical danger.

THAT is abusive.

3. Respond to the same request repeatedly because the statute says a request cannot be ignored despite it being harassment.....

THAT is abusive.

By adding the term “abusive” you add a small, but badly needed amendment to support agencies.

On behalf of the University of Maryland, College Park please support SB 554 cross-filed HB 806.

Thank you.